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ABSTRACT

The Training Opportunities Program (TOP) is an occupational project for New York City high school students. TOP trainees are placed in businesses and agencies with facilities, equipment, and human resources not available in the public schools. In 1983-84, the third year of the program's operation, TOP was funded to serve 2,000 students. An evaluation of that year's program found that the employers who retained trainees were unanimous in citing good trainee performance on the job as the reason they retained trainees as regular employees. Most employers said they would continue to participate in TOP, and most were extremely positive in describing their experiences with the program. When contrasted with a group of non-participating students, TOP participants had higher achievement in English, social studies, and in their area of specialization or major. Similarly, the TOP student recruitment and selection process is based on a number of considerations, including achievement in academic subjects, but coordinators relied most heavily on their personal knowledge of the student's abilities and the demands at the job site. Major findings and recommendations of the evaluation were: (1) the academic achievement of students with high grades declined slightly while participating in TOP, but lower-achieving students' grades improved; (2) absence rates declined for all TOP participants surveyed, but especially for below average students; (3) TOP should continue to emphasize trainees' vocational skills and interests, since these are more important to employers than academic skills; (4) the current selection process for participants should be revised to deemphasize the importance of strong grades in academic subjects; and (5) a greater range of students should be included in the program. (KH)

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TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM (TOP)
EMPLOYER/TRAINEE COMPONENT
1983-84

OEA Evaluation Report

CE034486

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM (TOP)
EMPLOYER/TRAINEE COMPONENT
1983-84

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EVALUATION SUMMARY

The Training Opportunities Program (TOP) is an occupational training project for New York City high school students administered by the Work Experience and Training Unit (W.E.T.U.) of the Division of High Schools and funded through a tax-levy allocation from the New York City Council. In 1983-84, the third year of the program's operation, TOP was funded for $2,545,786 to serve 2,000 students.

TOP trainees are placed in business and agencies with facilities, equipment, and human resources not available in the public schools.

The 1983-84 TOP evaluation focused on: 1) employers' retention of TOP trainees as regular employees and their reasons for retaining trainees and 2) the effect of TOP participation on trainees' school achievement and other behavior.

A random sample of 304 TOP students in ten participating TOP high schools were chosen according to grade level, reading test scores, and occupational specialization or major. The selection criteria included the length of time the TOP students were employed and the availability of reading scores. A comparison group of 287 non-TOP students were from the same schools and in the same grades as the TOP sample.

Seventy TOP employers were interviewed by telephone. Top coordinators in the ten sample schools were interviewed. Additionally, each coordinator was asked to provide information such as TOP trainees' placement sites, start date, and job tasks.

The TOP employers in the sample represented training sites in six different work settings: public and private sector offices, hospitals, manufacturing and repair shops, supply and sales outlets, landscaping and custodial/maintenance, and cultural centers.

Eighteen of the 70 employers (26 percent) in the sample retained TOP trainees as regular employees after the TOP program had ended. An additional twenty employers (29 percent) wanted to retain their trainees as employees, but could not because the trainee had not completed school or, in the case of government agencies, could not meet civil service requirements. One third of the sample (24 employers) did not consider trainees because there were no positions available at their companies.

The employers who retained trainees were unanimous in citing good or excellent trainee performance on the job as the reason they retained trainees as regular employees. Most TOP employers in the sample, 84 percent (59), said they would continue to participate in TOP in the

future. Overall, TOP employers were extremely positive regarding their experiences with the program.

When contrasted with the comparison group of non-TOP participants, TOP students had higher achievement in English, social studies and in their area of specialization or major. Performance in mathematics and absence rates for TOP and non-TOP students were comparable.

TOP coordinators used the following considerations to select participants for the program: 1) acquired skills and training, 2) school attendance, 3) course grades, 4) behavior, and 5) motivation. Class schedules were an important factors in the placement process. Coordinators relied heavily on their personal knowledge of the student's abilities and the demands at the job site, as well as the priority given certain types of work, in making placement decisions. Most coordinators said they established minimal scholastic criteria which only excluded students who had failed one or two classes.

Frequent lateness, poor attendance and disciplinary problems were important factors in the process of "weeding out" the applicant pool. Most coordinators felt that students with problems in these areas would probable have problems on the job.

A number of coordinators noted that motivation and interest were critical factors in the selection process. Grades for TOP participants in the area of specialization or major were higher than those for nonTOP students. Grades in other academic subjects also tended to be higher for TOP participants. At six of the ten schools in the sample, students who were selected for TOP were absent fewer days than non-TOP students.

Findings suggest that academic performance was given more weight in the selection process than coordinators believed .

In general, the placement occupational areas corresponded to the areas of specialization or majors of the TOP trainees. The business category was the one area where placements did not correspond to student specializations or majors.

The majors or specializations for which no placements were available were accounting, business, secretarial, and cosmetology.

The major findings were:

° Students with high grades declined slightly in academic achievement, while students with low grades increased their grade point scores significantly.

- Absence rates decline for all TOP participants in the survey, but the absence rates of below average and marginal students declined at twice the rate for above average students.

The major recommendations that emerge from the evaluation are:

- TOP should continue to emphasize the vocational skills and interests of trainees since these seem more important to employers than academic skills.

- TOP staff should consider reviewing and revising the current selection criteria for participants and the recruitment and selection process itself. These procedures should continue to give weight to classroom performance in the occupational specialization or major, but de-emphasize the importance of strong grades in academic subject areas. The motivation and interest of students also appears important.

- A greater range of students should be included in the program, since TOP had its greatest positive impact on students with below average or marginal grades in academic subject areas.

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I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

THE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

The Training Opportunities Program (TOP) is an occupational training project for New York City high school students. The program is administered by the Work Experience and Training Unit (W.E.T.U.) of the Division of High Schools and funded through a tax-levy allocation from the New York City Council. In 1983-84, the third year of the program's operation, TOP was funded for $2,545,786 to serve 2,000 students.

TOP trainees are placed in businesses and agencies with facilities, equipment, and human resources not available in the public schools. The development of training placements in the following 15 occupational areas is a major program priority.

Automotive Diagnostics
Computer Maintenance/Repair
Construction Technology
Drafting
Environmental Technology
Fashion Textiles Industry
Graphics/Communications
Health
Machine Tool Technology
Medical Equipment Repair
Optical Dispensing Technology
Plastics Technology
Security Systems Technology
Telecommunications
Word Processing/Micro-Processing

TOP trainees spend up to 15 hours per week at their placement sites and are paid at the minimum wage. The program pays 100 percent of trainee wages at public and private non-profit sites and 50 percent of trainee wages at private-for-profit placements. Most trainees work after school, but a number are on cooperative education-type schedules and alternate a full week at the placement site with a full week at school.

In 1983-84, the W.E.T.U. requested a two-part evaluation of TOP. This

report is an evaluation of the employer and trainer components of the program. The report contains an introduction, a brief description of the evaluation methodology, presentation of evaluation findings, and conclusions and recommendations.

*A descriptive analysis of the TOP special education component has been compiled as a separate report, "Training Opportunities Program, Special Education Component 1983-84. Instructional Support Evaluation Unit, Office of Educational Assessment, undated."

II. EVALUATION DESIGN

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The 1983-84 TOP evaluation focused on: 1) employers' retention of TOP trainees as regular employees and their reasons for retaining trainees and, 2) the effect of TOP participation on trainees' school achievement and other behavior.

TOP Employers

The evaluation component for TOP employers had three major objectives:

1. To identify the reasons TOP employers retain or do not retain TOP trainees;
2. To determine the characteristics, wage levels, and job responsibilities of TOP trainees who are retained as regular employees after they complete TOP and graduate from high school; and
3. To determine how the retention rate of TOP graduates by employers might be improved.

TOP Participants

The evaluation component for TOP participants had two objectives:

1. To determine whether participation in TOP affected the achievement of trainees in their high school courses; and
2. To identify other benefits trainees derived from TOP participation.

METHODOLOGY

TOP Employers

A telephone questionnaire to be administered to TOP employers was developed, field tested, and revised by O.E.A. The final version of the instrument consisted of open and closed ended questions (see Appendix A), taking 15-30 minutes to administer.

A sample of 75 employers representing the occupational areas in which trainees were placed was randomly selected by the O.E.A. The primary company contact persons for TOP or the overall supervisors of the trainees were identified to receive the questionnaire. The telephone questionnaire was administered to 70 of these respondents.

TOP Participants

A sample of ten participating TOP high schools was selected by applying criteria that included type of school and geographical location. Four academic and six vocational high schools were selected for the survey. Of the ten schools, three were located in Manhattan, two in the Bronx, two in Brooklyn, two in Queens, and one in Staten Island. Three of the schools used the alternating week in school/week on the job schedule and the remaining seven schools scheduled students at the work sites after school. (See Appendix B). The schools in the sample were selected to represent a wide variety of occupational areas such as: clerical, commercial arts, construction, computers, drafting, electrical trades, electronics, horticulture, health refrigeration and automotive repair, secretarial services, and small animal care. For purposes of analysis, the sample schools were categorized as academic-comprehensive or vocational-technical and the occupational areas were clustered into four major categories: business, caregiving, technical-manual, and other unclassified.

A random sample of 304 TOP students was chosen according to grade level, reading test scores, and occupational specialization or major. The selection criteria included the length of time the TOP students were employed and the availability of reading scores. TOP trainees who had worked six or more

months after October, 1983, were included in the sample. Trainees who were dropped from the program or quit were not included. Students who did not take the standardized reading achievement tests that year were also excluded from the sample. Approximately 50 percent of the original TOP sample pool met both criteria.

The comparison group of 287 non-TOP students were from the same schools and in the same grades as the TOP sample. Students in the TOP and non-TOP sample had comparable reading scores. Reading scores were matched by students' grade-equivalent scores. In all but two schools, students who did not take the October, 1982, or October, 1983, reading tests were not included in the sample. At one site, the May, 1983, test scores were used. At the other, 1983 grades in English were used to choose the non-TOP sample.

Students were grouped by occupational specialization or major. The final sample consisted of 591 students: 304 TOP trainees and a comparison group of 287 non-TOP students.

Data Collection and Analysis

Seventy TOP employers were interviewed by telephone. Responses to open-ended questions were content-analyzed and responses to forced-choice questions were tabulated. Given the restrictive criteria for sample selection, the responses (particularly retention rates) should not be generalized, but may be considered suggestive of possible results for the program.

The following data were collected from each students' permanent record: (1) English, mathematics, social studies, and vocational course or specialization grades for the spring and fall, 1983, and (2) attendance records for the spring and fall, 1983.

TOP coordinators in the ten sample schools were interviewed. Additionally, each coordinator was asked to provide information such as TOP trainees' placement sites, start date, and job tasks.

III. FINDINGS

The TOP employers in the sample represented training sites in six different work settings: public and private sector offices, hospitals, manufacturing and repair shops, supply and sales outlets, landscaping and custodial/maintenance, and cultural centers.

TRAINEE RETENTION

Eighteen of the 70 employers (26 percent) in the sample retained TOP trainees as regular employees after the TOP program had ended. An additional twenty employers (29 percent) wanted to retain their traineees as employees, but could not because the trainee had not completed school or, in the case of government agencies, could not meet civil service requirements. One third of the sample (24 employers) did not consider trainees because there were no positions available at their companies.

The employers who retained trainees were unanimous in citing good or excellent trainee performance on the job as the reason they retained trainees as regular employees.

TRAINEES AS REGULAR EMPLOYEES

Nine of the 18 trainees (50 percent) who were retained assumed full-time positions at their former placement sites. The retained trainees also tended to have their responsibilities, workload, and wages increased once they became regular employees at their former training sites. Fourteen (80 percent) of the former trainees had their wages and workload increased and 15 (86 percent) were given added reponsibilities.

Employers who retained trainees were more likely to choose trainees who were rated highly on job related criteria (see Table 1). Trainee previous experience was the only area in which employers gave trainees low ratings: 49 percent of the employers rated trainee prior experience as not adequate.

EMPLOYER PARTICIPATION IN TOP

Forty-six employers (65 percent) in the sample had participated in the TOP in prior years: 18 (25 percent) had accepted TOP students since 1981-82 and 28 (40 percent) became TOP placements in 1982-83. Most TOP employers in the sample, 84 percent (59), said they would continue to participate in TOP in the future. Overall, TOP employers were extremely positive regarding their experiences with the program.

STUDENT BACKGROUND

Forty-nine of the students in the TOP evaluation sample were not included in the evaluation because they were either not placed, had withdrawn, or been dropped by the program. Of the remaining 255 TOP students in the sample, 56 percent (143) attended vocational high schools and 44 percent (112) were enrolled in academic-comprehensive schools. Almost half of the students in the academic-comprehensive schools specialized in the health field; smaller numbers of students specialized in business, horticulture, or small animal care. Nearly one-third of the students in vocational schools were carpentry majors. Electrical and commercial arts were the areas which contained the second and third largest number of trainees. Most academic high school students were classified into the caregiving and business categories, while vocational students were grouped into technical-manual and business categories.

Table 1

Employer Ratings of Adequate or Better
of 1983-84 TOP Trainees

Criteria	Employers Total	Employers No. Responses	Percent of Employers Rating Trainees Adequate or Better
Attitudes Towards Co-Workers	53	51	96%
Interest in the Job	54	51	94%
Ability to Learn Work Tasks	52	49	94%
Work Habits	54	51	94%
Basic Academic Skills	54	48	84%
Attitude Towards Work Tasks	54	50	92%
Prior Work Experience	49	25	51%

- Almost all TOP employers rated trainees' attitudes, skills, and abilities as adequate or better.
- About half of the TOP employers rated trainees' previous work experience as adequate or better.

Despite the diversity in their backgrounds, there was a general consistency among TOP students regarding their grades in English, social studies, mathematics, and area of specialization. Vocational school students tended to perform slightly lower in social studies and slightly higher in mathematics than their counterparts in academic high schools. The absence rate for vocational school students was also higher than the rate for students in academic high schools (see Table 2).

When contrasted with the comparison group of non-TOP participants, TOP students had higher achievement in English, social studies and in their area of specialization or major. Performance in mathematics and absence rates for TOP and non-TOP students were comparable.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

TOP coordinators received lists of job opportunities throughout the school year from the TOP central office. Although some coordinators maintained a pool of jobs from which they filled training slots, most recruited students only as positions became available. Several coordinators mentioned they had some difficulty placing available and qualified students with certain backgrounds, e.g., plumbing and medical technology.

TOP coordinators used the following considerations to select participants for the program: (1) acquired skills and training, (2) school attendance, (3) course grades, (4) behavior, and (5) motivation. Class schedules were an important factor in the placement process.

Trainees were expected to possess the skills and training that matched employer needs, i.e., to have attained what employers considered minimal

Table 2

Spring, 1983 Grades and Absences of TOP Participants
By Type of High School

	English	Social Studies	Math	Major	Number of Absences
Academic/ Comprehensive Schools	75.1 (N=131)	76.8 (N=103)	68.3 (N=78)	78.5 (N=129)	6.5 (N=132)
Vocational/ Technical Schools	75.3 (N=172)	73.5 (N=134)	70.2 (N=72)	78.5 (N=173)	7.6 (N=173)
Total (N)	303	237	150	302	305

- There was a general consistency among TOP students' grades in different subject areas.
- There was little difference in mean grades between TOP students in academic/comprehensive high schools and those in vocational/ technical schools.
- The absence rate among TOP students in vocational/technical schools was slightly higher than among TOP students in academic/ comprehensive schools.

entry level skills through taking one or two specialized courses at school. When TOP coordinators received listings of available placements they asked teachers in appropriate subject areas to recommend students. For example, if a job was available that required plumbing skills, the plumbing teacher was asked to recommend students. In the vocational high schools, coordinators usually taught vocational courses from which they often selected students for the program. Students frequently decided to apply for the program after hearing about it from someone else and were required to obtain a recommendation from a teacher as part of the application process. Coordinators relied heavily on their personal knowledge of the student's abilities and the demands at the job site, as well as the priority given certain types of work, in making placement decisions.

Students' permanent records were used to obtain information on grades. Some schools used a ranked list and chose only those students who were academically above average, but most coordinators said they established minimal scholastic criteria which only excluded students who had failed one or two classes.

Frequent lateness, poor attendance and disciplinary problems were important factors in the process of "weeding out" the applicant pool. Most coordinators felt that students with problems in these areas would probably have problems on the job.

A number of coordinators noted that motivation and interest were critical factors in the selection process. Many college bound students, for example, were not viewed by coordinators to be as motivated as those who planned to go directly to work after graduation. Another important motivational factor was the students' perception of their ability to cope with the combined

pressures of work and school. Guidance counselors also screened candidates and consulted with coordinators.

The class schedules of prospective trainees proved to be a constraint in the recruitment and selection process. Some placements required that students be able to leave school early, so seniors, who generally have shorter programs or greater flexibility in scheduling, were best able to take advantage of the available training placements. Coordinators noted that scheduling difficulties occasionally limited students' availability for jobs in fields such as plumbing.

A range of students was selected from among the different schools. Five coordinators admitted a small number of students with weak academic records, mediocre skill levels, or poor attendance histories, and reported mixed results. Coordinators in three vocational schools said they did not pay attention to grades, and instead selected students according to the skill the students demonstrated in their vocational area. High grades were important in only one school. For most coordinators, the only requirement was that students had an overall passing average.

The data analysis generally confirmed the TOP coordinators' assessment of the recruitment and selection process. Grades for TOP participants in the area of specialization or major were higher than those for non-TOP students. This reflects coordinators' emphasis on prior training and demonstrated skill as key factors in the selection process. Grades in other academic subjects also tended to be higher for TOP participants. The differences in grades of TOP and non-TOP students were observed in all but one school where the coordinator was committed to using the program as an incentive to keep potential dropouts in school. This finding suggests that academic perfor-

mance was given more weight in the selection process than coordinators believed (see Table 3).

At six of the ten schools in the sample, students who were selected for TOP were absent fewer days than non-TOP students. Only one school in the sample had a higher pre-program absence rate for TOP students than non-TOP students.

STUDENT PLACEMENT

The highest number of placements were in health, horticulture, and small animal care in the caregiving category; carpentry, electrical work, and commercial arts in the technical-manual category; and clerical work in the business category. In general, the placement occupational areas corresponded to the areas of specialization or majors of the TOP trainees. The business category was the one area where placements did not correspond to student specializations or majors.

Nearly all of the TOP students who majored in computers, clerical work, climate control, plumbing, and small animal care were placed in compatible settings. The majors or specializations for which no placements were available were accounting, business, secretarial, and cosmetology. One coordinator suggested that the placement problem was attributable to the the students' lack of skills in areas such as stenography and bookkeeping. Another explanation is that employers are reluctant to assign trainees to important and difficult tasks such as maintaining the company books. The lack of placements in cosmetology is a reflection of the problems inherent in attempting to place students in career related settings which are regu-

Table 3

Spring, 1983 Grades and Absences of Evaluation Sample of TOP Program, 1983-84

	English	Social Studies	Math	Major	Number of Absences
TOP Participants	75.2	75.0	69.3	78.5	7.2
S.D.	(13.7)	11.7	13.2	9.7	7.3
N =	303	234	150	302	305
Non-TOP Participants	73.2	72.1	69.0	75.9	7.7
S.D.	13.6	13.0	14.4	11.8	6.2
N =	290	221	130	290	291

- Grades for TOP participants in the area of specialization or major were higher than those of for non-TOP participants.
- Grades in other academic subjects tended to be higher for TOP than non-TOP participants.

lated by licensing provisions. Students appeared to have the greatest difficulty obtaining placements in health, electrical work, carpentry, and commercial arts. TOP coordinators who were responsible for placing students in health and commercial arts noted that the highly competitive nature of those occupational areas both within the TOP program and actual world of work may be contributing factors.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

One of the concerns of this evaluation was to assess the impact of TOP participation on trainee academic performance and school attendance. For the purposes of this evaluation, academic performance includes grades in English, social studies, mathematics, and the area of specialization or major. The evaluation also sought to identify other benefits, such as changes in attitudes and the acquisition of life and work skills students derived from TOP.

Academic Performance

When TOP trainees were examined as a group, academic performance did not vary significantly before and after participation in the program. (see Table 4). However, when TOP students were categorized by their scholastic levels, significant differences emerged. TOP students were divided into two categories based on their grades prior to TOP participation: 1) students whose grades in English and social studies were 75 or above and whose mathematics grades were 65 or above, and 2) students whose English and social studies grades were less than 75 and whose mathematics grades were less than 65.

The academic performance of the high grades group decreased during the time they participated in TOP. The average decline in grades between the spring 1983 and the fall 1983 term was 4.3 to 5.8 grade points. In general, the decline was greatest for the student's best subject and the least impact for the student's poorest subject.

The pattern was reversed for students in category 2: grades improved significantly during the time they participated in TOP. The average increase in grades between the spring TOP and the fall term as TOP trainees ranged from a gain of 8.6 grade points in social studies to 16 grade points in mathematics.

The improvement in grades of poorer students (category 2) was far greater than the decline in grade points for better students (category 1). The grades for poorer students improved at a rate that was two to three times greater than the rate of decline in the grades of the better TOP students. (see Table 4).

Attendance

The school attendance of TOP students improved significantly during their participation in the program. Students with high absence rates (more than six days per term) improved their attendance at twice the rate of students with low absence rates (less than seven days per term). The pattern of change among TOP students was similar for both academic performance and school atendance: the gains for students who performed at lower levels prior to participating in TOP were far greater than the gains of students who had higher grades and fewer absences before participating in TOP.

Non-Academic Benefits

TOP coordinators noted that students gained other benefits such as improved attitudes and skills that helped them at school and work. Coordinators emphasized their belief that students developed skills which increased their employability. They stated that trainees acquired a basic understanding about the job search process including: (1) the information or materials they needed to bring to a job site, (2) how to apply for a job and complete the necessary forms, and (3) the questions they should ask about work conditions.

Coordinators reported that trainees also mastered skills associated with keeping a job, such as: (1) getting to work on time, (2) punching in and out, (3) calling in sick and notifying employers of times they would be absent or late, (4) taking orders and working with others, and (5) demonstrating initiative on the job. Trainees worked with people from different trades, and of varying ages and abilities. They had the opportunity to apply and practice many of the things they had learned in class.

Coordinators stated that TOP trainees acquired information concerning career development in their field of interest and were able to make valuable contacts with employers and workers which could lead to future employment. One coordinator noted that trainees gained a sense of accomplishment and pride from working in the "real" world. Another noted that students took safety precautions in the actual work situations that they had previously treated lightly or disregarded.

According to TOP coordinators, these aspects of the program help increase students' maturity, increasing their self-confidence and sometimes giving

Table 4

Academic Achievement And Absence Rates
Of 1983-84 TOP Participants

English		Social Studies		Mathematics		Days Absent	
High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High Absence	Low Absence
-5.8	+10.6	-5.2	+8.6	-4.3	+16.0	3.5	6.4
N=173	N=123	N=133	N=92	N=72	N=24	N=221	N=134

KEY: High = Students whose grades prior to enrolling in the TOP were 75 or better in English and social studies and 65 or better in math.

Low = Students whose grades prior to enrolling in the TOP were less than 75 in English and social studies and less than 65 in math.

- Students with high grades declined slightly in academic achievement, while students with low grades increased their grade point scores significantly.
- Absence rates declined for all TOP participants in the survey, but the absence rates of below average and marginal students declined at twice the rate for above average students.

them a new sense of direction and interest in a career. For others, participation was seen as renewing their incentive to stay in school or giving them encouragement for apprenticeship programs.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Employers were highly supportive of the program. Twenty-six percent of the employers in the sample retained trainees as regular employees after the program ended and an additional 29 percent would have retained their trainees, but were constrained by non-program related factors. Employers were more concerned about the quality of trainees' vocational skills and interests than their academic skills. Employers in general were pleased to participate in TOP because the program provided subsidized training and vocational preparation to a pool of potential employees. The benefits that TOP students derived were significant to their employment training, and personal and career goals, according to program staff.

Absence rates for all TOP trainees improved once they entered the program, but the improvement was greatest for students with the highest pre-program absence rates. Grades declined for better students during their first term in TOP, but increased dramatically for poorer performing students. It is not clear whether the increases in grades and attendance that occurred after one term in TOP persisted through the fall, 1984 and into the following year.

The major recommendations that emerge from the evaluation are:

- TOP should continue to emphasize the vocational skills and interests of trainees since these seem more important to employers than academic skills.

- TOP staff should consider reviewing and revising the current selection criteria for participants and the recruitment and selection process itself. These procedures should continue to give weight to classroom performance in the occupational specialization or major, but de-emphasize the importance of strong grades in academic subject areas. The motivation and interest of students also appears important.

- A greater range of students should be included in the program, since TOP had its greatest positive impact on students with below average or marginal grades in academic subject areas.